Twenty-one years ago, on December 4, 1969, the u.s. government assassinated Black Panther Party leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark as they slept. Government agencies then spent years lying and trying to cover up this murder -- part of the now-infamous COINTELPRO of the FBI. This event was one of those that changed my life. It's part of why I stand here today. Living in a society that proclaims itself a just one, and yet murders African Americans who struggle for self-determination, means having to make hard choices for those who believe in human rights.

Those choices, for me, have involved something more than abstract issues of justice. They've involved the question of what kind of society I want to live in, what kind of human being I want to be, or think all of us could be.

The choices began early, because I grew up in the 50's and 60's, when schools in the North as well as the South were segregated, when Black people organized in the Civil Rights Movement had to risk their lives and safety to demand the most basic human rights and human dignity, when u.s. "democracy" was lynchings, was fire hoses and police dogs, was the House Unamerican Activities Committee and McCarthyism, was the Bay of Pigs and the Gulf of Tonkin. A time not so different from today.

I had to begin by choosing not to settle for the Walt Disney version of u.s. history that was taught in the schools of the 50's, and instead to learn the real history of this country, starting with the genocide against Native Americans and the theft of their land. I had to figure out whether the things I saw happening around me were isolated incidents or signs of deeper problems -- signs that our entire society was built on and embued with injustice, racism, national oppression and a profound disrespect for women.

Over the years, other concepts emerged, giving me a vision of what could replace this cynical, corrupt thing that called itself u.s. democracy. Those concepts were liberation, people's power, self-determination, solidarity. I experienced them only because of the choices I made -- to change my own life, to struggle against oppression and exploitation, to fight for my own liberation as a woman, to fight for fundamental social change. For me, these were necessary choices.

The government has tried to define me, my comrades, and our Resistance Conspiracy as a choice to break the law, a choice to be violent and to be criminal. But it's not a thirst for confrontation and violence that motivates me, it's a thirst for liberation, for justice and peace. None of us has been afraid to stand in opposition to injustice and brutality, even if we had to stand alone. At times, this has been necessary, because we are white children of Amerikkka who fight white supremacy and racism. We are children of the u.s. empire who fight against imperialism.

But this case is not about individuals standing alone. It's been labelled a conspiracy -- but in reality it's about the legitimacy of an

entire movement of resistance to injustice. In the years covered by this indictment, thousands of anti-imperialist activists, and more recently, lesbian and gay activists, have risked arrest in order to protest the policies and practices we "conspired" to oppose. For those of us who were arrested, whatever means of struggle we chose, we were all imprisoned for fighting against u.s. government violations of International Law. This government puts us in the difficult position of having to choose between morality and law, or between International Law -- based primarily on human rights -- and u.s. domestic law -- based primarily on property rights. Many of us have chosen to act rather than to be complicit.

I have always taken responsibility for my political work and actions -- but the government has never taken responsibility for its actions, policies, and programs, nor for the devestation these policies have caused. Not for the invasion of Grenada. Not for the colonization of Puerto Rico. Not for the invasion of Panama, or of the Middle East. Not for bombing and murdering eleven children, women, and men of the MOVE family, and destroying an entire block of homes in the African American community in Philadelphia on May 13, 1985. The only person indicted after that criminal act was one of the survivors, Ramona Africa.

On the day of the bombing of the MOVE family, I was held in preventive detention, where I've remained ever since. In the 5 1/2 years since that day, I've been locked up in more than 10 different jails and prisons. I've lived among the dispossessed. I've witnessed the suffering, the slow death, the daily violence this system inflicts on African American women and other oppressed and poor women. Instead of the right of self-determination, genocide. Instead of respect and esteem, objectification and abuse. The conditions in the jails have meant that every day has been hard time. But what has been the hardest for me is that the suffering around me has become my own. I have watched my friends grow sick with AIDS, with no medical care or counseling offered by the prison system. I have held in my arms a sister burning with fever, who had been told "you have the virus, you are going to die," and sent back to her cold cell. I have seen a dear friend taken off to the hospital, where she died shackled to her bed. Trying to alleviate some small portion of this suffering is the reason for the community service projects I have proposed to the Court. This work is consistent with the political and social goals that have motivated me throughout my life.

I know that you don't think we are political prisoners, and I certainly don't expect leniency based on my status as a political prisoner. But we are political prisoners. Our actions and our lives consist of a struggle to put an end to the war, suffering and deprivation caused by the United States government. Nothing about my life or actions has been for personal gain. It seems to me that it is most cynical for the u.s. -- a country built on violence and domination -- to deny political status to those who believe that people have the right to fight for their freedom.

Because I have put my beliefs into practice, and have been willing to fight for freedom and liberation, the FBI has labelled me (like other

political prisoners) a terrorist. Calling me a "terrorist" allowed the government to put me in maximum security solitary confinement for six months in Alderson, West Virginia, in 1986 -- while I was a pre-trial detainee. They had never done that to any other unconvicted prisoner before. They call my comrade Dr. Alan Berkman a terrorist, too -- and then use that label to deny him release and adequate medical care while he is desperately ill.

When Alan stood here two and a half years ago and argued that the security measures in this case were political, and that the conditions in which we were held would promote a recurrence of his cancer, he was right. Today he is so ill with that cancer that he is unable to be here in court -- unable to walk, unable to write. Yet the government is still trying to kill him by refusing to release him and by designating him to "the hole" at the notoriously inadequate U.S. PRison Hospital in Springfield, Missouri. When Alan requested a sentence reduction, the government said, "if you snitch, we'll let you go." They gave him a list of questions and said, "answer them and you can get out." He refused -- and again, three months later, he was denied parole.

We are not the terrorists.

The word "terrorism" has nothing to do with who I am. But the words "solidarity" and "internationalism" do. These are much harder words for this society to understand, because they have infinite human value but no price. And this system has bartered away so much of its humanity through greed and aggression that it finds it hard to comprehend anything that has value rather than price.

I have accepted the internationalist responsibility to respond and intervene to prevent violations of human rights and to uphold the right of self-determination. My actions have all been taken as part of a much broader struggle for justice -- a struggle that expresses the most creative aspirations of humanity.

My comrade Susan Rosenberg wrote a poem about this: Sparks Fly:

A calm shuddering deep within
a chill that rises in the midst of dryness
an inner core anger, slowly turning into a fury.

There is no peace without justice
there is no justice without freedom
there is no freedom without dignity and liberation
there is no victory for those who never attempt.

When they took us we weren't ready
But -- we were more ready than others
We didn't go quietly, but no one stopped them.
Some said "they brought it on themselves."
Others, "better them than us."
And still others felt the sparks fly
and said we are not lost in the stars.

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To the comrades and friends here today -- thank you for all your support. This is the end of the Resistance Conspiracy Case. You've enabled us to expose the purpose of this prosecution and to prevent the

government from isolating us and criminalizing anti-imperialist struggle. You have helped us feel alive and be productive. You have helped us to fight for Alan's life, to support him in his courageous battle to survive the government's continuing attempts to kill him.

Look at us here -- Susan, Tim, Linda. Think of Marilyn. Think of Alan. Think of the scores and scores of other political prisoners and Prisoners of War we represent. Think of Bashir Hameed, held in solitary confinement for the past two years, denied medical attention and religious expression in a New York State prison. Think of Mumia Abu-Jamal, fighting for his life under threat of execution in Pennsylvania -- the only political prisoner on death row.

Don't let the walls go back up between us. We've been able to reach one another through this u.s. government "security" shield. Don't let the walls of Marion and Marianna bury us and remove us from you.

Someday soon, I will be out there with you. Together, we will struggle for the freedom of all these fine comrades -- until we succeed and free all political prisoners and Prisoners of War. I love you. VENCEREMOS!